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ABSTRACT

The increased use of part-time faculty in community colleges has left in its wake a large literature on the problems posed by heavy reliance on part-time faculty and on the need to address these problems through staff development programs. Four approaches have been used by community colleges to deal with the staff development needs of their part-time faculty. The first approach is based on a curriculum development model, which is characterized as a set of in-service workshops and courses designed to complement the part-timer's subject expertise with activities to strengthen pedagogical skills and provide information about the community college. The second approach involves the formation of peer support networks through which part-timers share experiences and help each other with problems encountered on the job. The third is a personnel management approach, whereby the college's recruitment, hiring, and evaluation policies are developed with improved instruction in mind. The fourth approach draws upon theories of adult education to involve part-timers in identifying and solving the problems they face on the job. This approach stresses the development of part-timers' awareness of work problems as a means of fostering receptiveness to staff development interventions. All of the approaches seek to instruct part-timers in pedagogical techniques and thus to improve instruction, and aim to integrate part-time faculty into the college community. (RO)

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APPROACHES TO STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR PART-TIME FACULTY

ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges

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JC 860 321

Approaches to Staff Development for Part-Time Faculty:

An ERIC Digest

The increased use of part-time faculty (who made up 42 percent of community college instructors in 1960 and 56 percent in 1984) has left in its wake a large literature on the problems posed by part-timers and on the need to address these problems through staff development programs. Williams (1985) presents a thorough review of this literature, noting several areas of concern: recruiting and hiring procedures that are more relaxed than those employed for full-time staff; the limited teaching expertise that part-timers bring to the classroom; the tendency of full-time staff to look down upon and alienate their part-time colleagues; and the unfavorable working conditions imposed by inadequate incentives for improved importance and by the limited access part-timers have to office and support services. Many authors, Williams notes, acknowledge the benefits of hiring part-timers (cost effectiveness, scheduling flexibility, etc.). But the literature, he argues, tends to the conclusion that the "problems inherent in employing large numbers of part-timers . . . outweigh the advantages" and that improved in-service development is needed to ensure the instructional quality of part-time staff (p. 38).

How have community colleges addressed this need? The following paragraphs discuss four approaches that have been used to provide staff development for part-timers. The first is based on a curriculum development model and focuses on the formation of in-service training programs. The second rests on peer support through a network of peer consultants. The third is a personnel management approach that combines hiring and orientation

procedures with in-service training to maximize the productivity of part-time instructors. And the fourth draws upon theories of adult education to involve part-timers in identifying and solving the problems they face on the job.

The Curriculum Development Approach

In many cases, staff development is conceptualized as a set of in-service workshops and courses that are designed to complement the part-timer's subject expertise with pedagogical skills and background information about the community college. The staff development process, then, becomes one of designing a series of courses or workshops, administering those courses, and providing students (in this case part-time instructors) with support services. The steps in the process, outlined by Pedras (1985), included (1) assigning the administration of the staff development program to one person who will be in charge of promoting the program and evaluating it, (2) surveying part-time faculty to determine training needs, (3) using a prioritized listing of these needs to develop the training program and write course syllabi, (4) determining what format classes should take (one-day workshop, one-hour lecture, etc.) and specifying when, where and how often they should be offered; (5) securing adequate funding, and (6) supplying necessary support services, such as the publication of a handbook for part-timers. Pedras cautions that program success will depend largely on the degree to which part-timers themselves are involved in the planning process.

The instructional development program at Hinds Junior College (Mississippi) illustrates the type of in-service curriculum that can be developed for part-time faculty. Described by Rabalais and Perritt (1983), the program consists of four one-day modules through which part-time faculty progress over a period of four semesters. The first module is an introduction

to the college itself and provides information on the types of programs offered by the college, the college's mission, student characteristics, instructional policies, and instructor evaluation procedures. The second module deals with testing, covering topics such as the purposes of testing, the qualities of a good test, the construction of various types of tests, recommended practices in testing, and grading procedures. The third module covers the use of instructional media available at the colleges, including films, slides, and requisite equipment. Finally, the fourth module deals with students; it provides information on the numbers of students in collegiate and vocational programs, student educational goals, and student ratings of instruction, grading, testing, and course content. The modules are development and taught, respectively, by the academic dean, the instructional development officer, the director of the media center, and the dean of student affairs.

Staff Development Through Peer Support

Another approach to staff development is the formation of peer support networks through which part-timers share experiences and help each other with problems encountered on the job. When such networks are developed, instructors can turn to their peers for assistance in problems not covered in orientation sessions or in the established staff development curriculum. Furthermore, these networks can go a long way to establish a rapport among instructors and alleviate the sense of alienation that part-timers often feel.

Vista College, a noncampus community college in California whose faculty consists primarily of part-timers, incorporates peer support as a major component of its faculty development program. Besides the provisions of orientation sessions, a faculty handbook, periodic newsletters, and annual seminars on teaching and learning, the college has organized a cadre of part-

timers to serve as "peer faculty consultants on teaching and learning." The cadre includes part-timers who are competent in special pedagogical areas (such as curriculum development or testing) and who are representative of all of the college's major instructional areas. The consultants provide mini-seminars on teaching problems to peers within their own departments and have often been approached by individualized faculty members for advice. Additional information on the admininistration and progress of the peer consultant program at Vista College is provided by Elioff (1983) who indicates that part-time faculty are very receptive to seminars and other staff development efforts that are led by peers who share their own problems and concerns.

The Personnel Management Approach

Some colleges have approached the faculty development problem through personnel management policies that not only cover the legalities of hiring and firing, but also service the purpose of instructional improvement. Since all faculty members are subject to the college's recruitment, hiring, and evaluation policies, it stands to reason that these policies should be developed with improved instruction in mind.

Parsons (1980) provides an example of the personnel management approach as it has been developed at Hagerstown Junior College (HJC) in Maryland. Staff Development for part-timers at HJC has six components. The first is recruitment which is formalized through a search committee that rigorously seeks out and screens potential part-timers; this assures that part-timers at HJC are not haphazardly selected. The second phase consists of orientation activities, including workshops, campus tours, and interview sessions that open communications links between new part-timers and administrators and full-

time instructors. These communication links are fostered in the third staff development component which consists of a weekly information bulletin for part-timers and the maintenance of an "evening duty calendar" that places administrators and counselors at the disposal of part-time instructors who teach in the evening. Support services make up the fourth component and are designed to assure the availability of office space, clerical assistance, and instructional materials and media. These support services are augmented in the fifth component by a series of instructional clinics that provide part-timers with information on such topics as competency-based module development, sex equity in instruction, and other pedagogical concerns. Finally, the staff development effort is capped off by an evaluation component. The firt course taught by a part-timer is evaluated by students and administrators; the instructor is evaluated annually from then on. The HJC staff development program, in short, focuses all personnel managment efforts on the selection, development, and evaluation of a nucleus of qualified part-time instructors.

The Adult Education Approach

Some colleges have viewed staff development for part-timers as an adult education process. Part-timers, it is reasoned, become aware of instructional problems as they carry out their work; and with this awareness, part-timers grow more receptive to staff development interventions. The task of the staff development officer, then, is to foster this awareness and receptiveness, thus harnessing (in the jargon of adult education) the part-timer's "teachable moments."

This adult education approach is illustrated by Heelan (1980) in her proposed staff development model for part-time instructors of noncredit classes at North Hennepin Community College (Minnesota). The model is similar to the personnel management approach, in that it involves all aspects of the

instructor's formal relation with the college, including the pre-hiring interview, the development of the employment contract, orientation sessions, performance evaluation, and in-service professional development activities. Each of these personnel management activities, however, is designed to foster an awareness of the need for faculty development and improvement. During the pre-hiring interview, for example, the prospective teacher may be asked to fill out a form soliciting information on the applicants' strengths and weaknesses as a teacher. The employment contract subsequently specifies the faculty member's obligation to participate in staff development activities and orientation sessions require new hires to list their expectations and concerns while at the same time sharing them with other instructors and faculty members. Evaluation efforts are diagnostic in nature and are designed to make instructors aware of potential problems. Finally, these problems, along with others identified in needs assessment surveys, are addressed in in-service activities. Heelan's proposed model, then, is based on the assumption that "adults attend a learning experience because they have become aware of an interest, a problem or a need within their own life." The model is also based on the belief that "Organizations, or the groups of people comprising them, seek growth or renewal or become amenable to change because they have a growing awareness of a need or a problem to be solved" (p. 51). By focusing on the needs felt by instructors, Heelan addresses the problem of motivating part-timers to participate in staff development activities.

Conclusion

As the above paragraphs indicate, staff development for part-timers has been conceptualized in many different ways: as a curriculum development problem, as a matter of per networking, as a personnel management issue, and

as an adult education problem. At a minimum, each approach seeks to instruct part-timers in pedagogical techniques and thus improve instructional quality. Another important goal is the integration of part-timers into the college community. The actual effect of these programs on part-timers and on instructional quality itself, however, remains unknown. Further research on the efficacy of various staff development interventions will be especially important as community colleges continue to depend on large cohorts of part-time faculty.

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